

Special Session

Inclusive Blood Donation: Understanding Behaviour, Barriers, and Motivators in Minority Donor Populations

12th September 2025 13.30 -15.00

Inclusivity in Blood Donation Matters

- In the past, certain groups (e.g. MSM, people with migration background etc.) were excluded from donating blood to protect recipients' safety.
- Today, advanced testing and risk-based assessments make broader inclusion possible.



Image source: <https://undraw.co/>

A sustainable blood supply requires more than numbers: Inclusive donor bases need to reflect society

The Challenge Blood Services Face

- Minority groups often show strong prosocial motives – yet remain underrepresented.
- Recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups remain difficult.
- Barriers differ across cultures, geographies, and social contexts.



Image source: <https://undraw.co/>

To move forward, we need to better understand behaviors, motives, barriers, and systemic constraints

Contact information:

German Red Cross

Social Impact Research Lab



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Blood donation in the Global South and among ethnic minorities in the Global North: a scoping review

Yara Dixon, MD, Sanquin, Amsterdam UMC

Prof. Eva-Maria Merz, Sanquin, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam



ECDHM 2025

Blood donation in the Global South and among ethnic minorities in the Global North: a scoping review

Yara Dixon, MD, PhD Candidate

*Cornelis van der Torren, Erfan Nur, Karin Fijnvandraat, Eva-Maria Merz
12-09-2025*



The problem

**Blood donor with European
descent bloodtype**



**SCD patient with African
descent bloodtype**

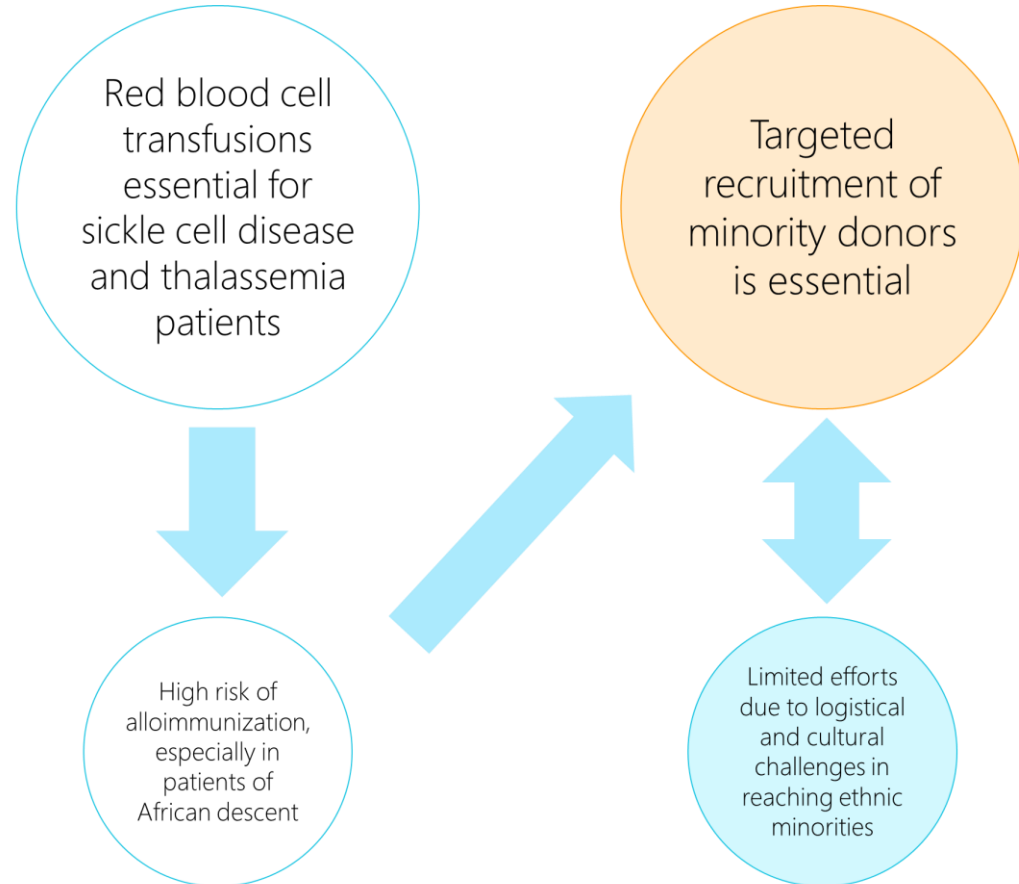


**SCD patient with
alloimmunization**





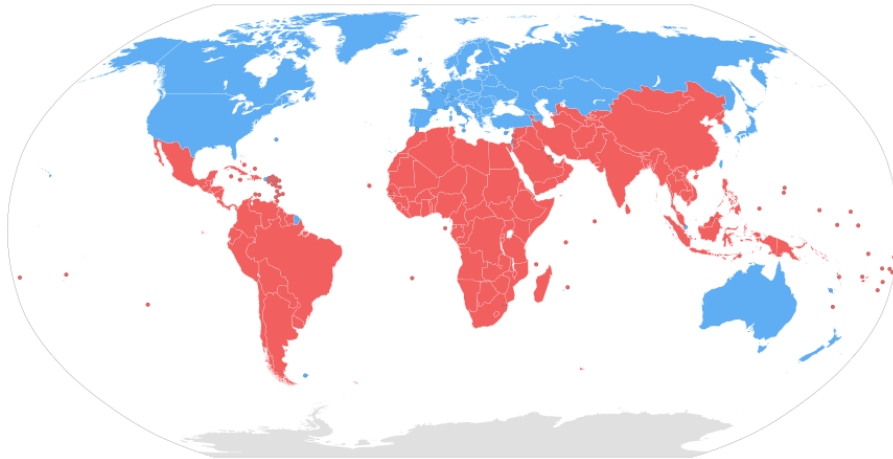
Background





Aims

To conduct a **scoping review** on donor research in the Global South and ethnic minorities in the Global North to:



Identify barriers and facilitators for ethnically diverse groups to be active as blood donors



Explore innovative interventions to overcome barriers and strengthen facilitators



Identify more inclusive approaches to blood donation and long-term donor retention



Methods

Search

- Literature was retrieved from Ovid MEDLINE, Web of Science, Scopus, Global Index Medicus, and Embase.
- A total of 8900 articles were screened for inclusion.

Inclusion

- Relevance: barriers, facilitators, knowledge, attitude, practices and/or interventions in blood donation
- Population: diverse ethnic groups globally, and studies from the Global North with focus on ethnic minorities
- Profession study population: specific healthcare professions were excluded

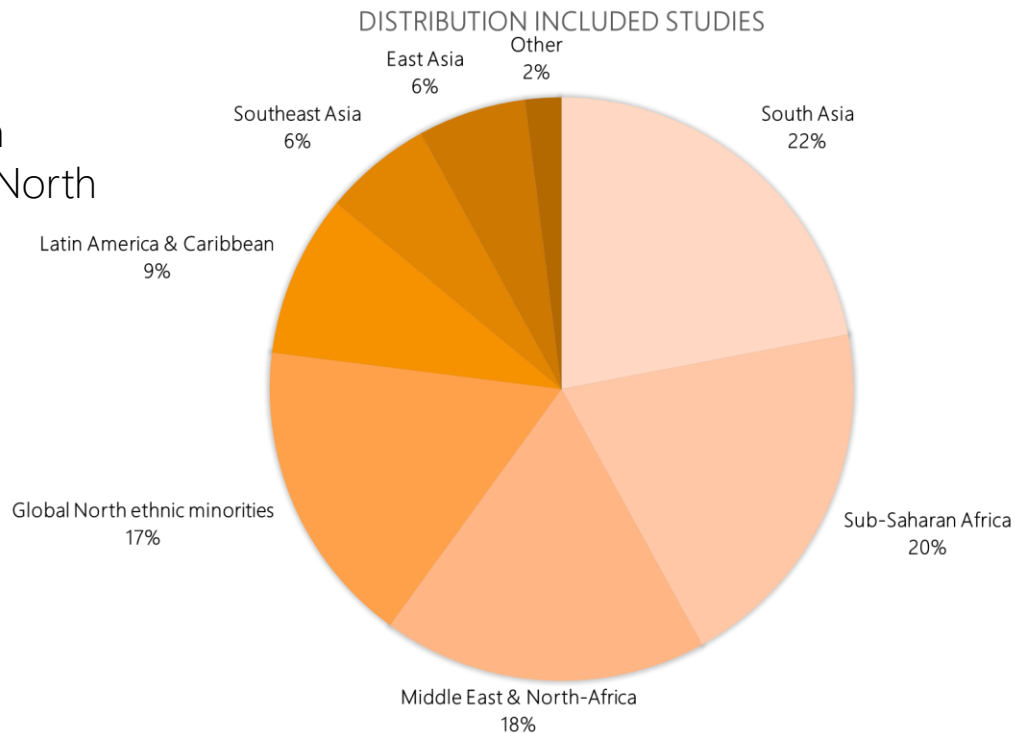
Screening

- The first author independently screened citations in Rayyan, categorizing them as include, maybe, or exclude.
- The second author verified a random sample (10%) of excluded articles, as well as all inclusion decisions.
- Articles marked as "maybe" were jointly reviewed to reach a consensus.



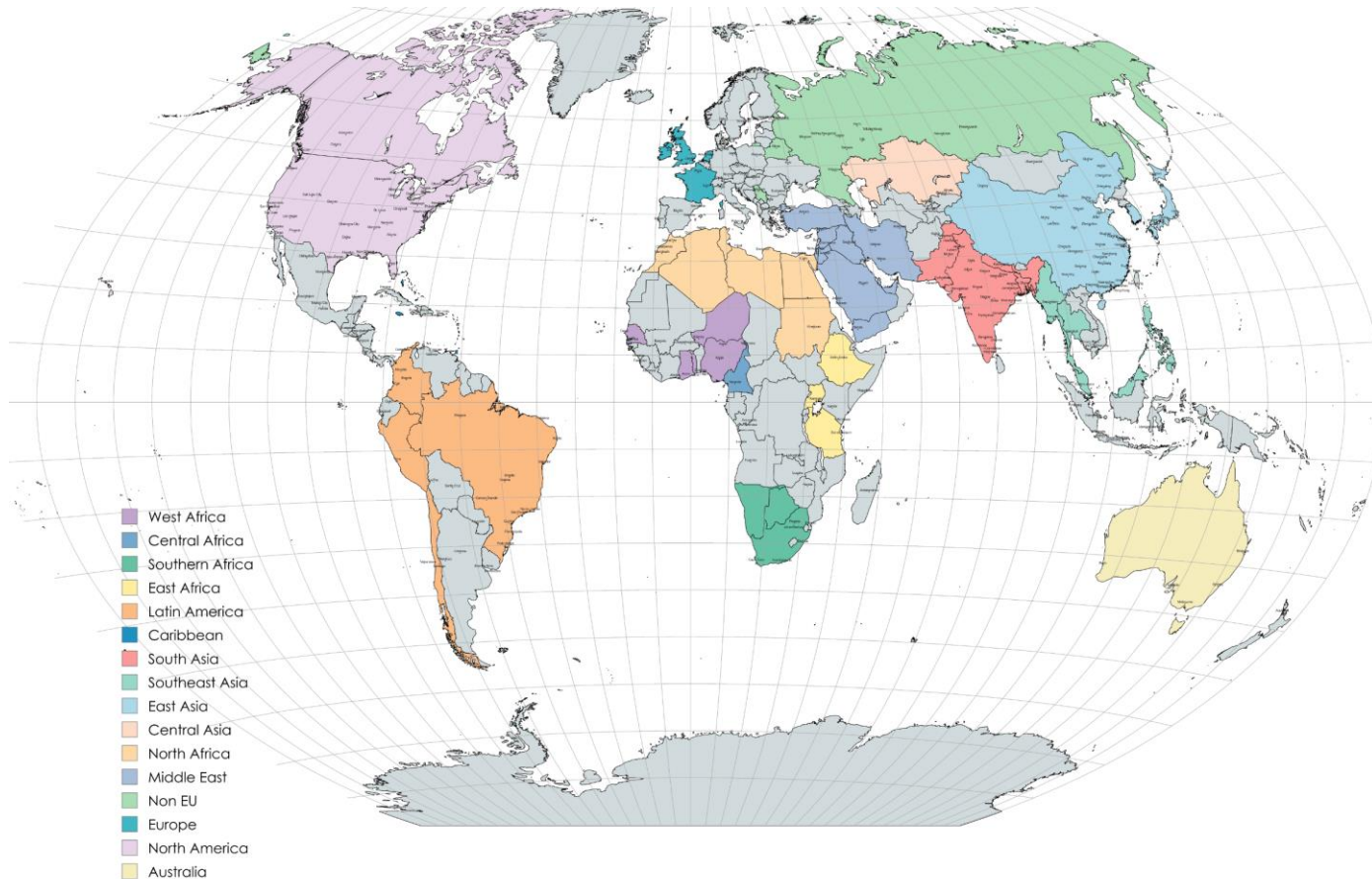
Results (1)

- Total of 345 studies included
- 1972-2024
- 67 different countries within Global South
- 57 studies on ethnic minorities in Global North
- Preliminary data





Results (2)





Results (3): Common mentioned barriers

	Practical	Medical	Psychological
Barriers	• Not being asked to donate • Lack of knowledge • Difficulty accessing donation centers • Remote living • Inconvenient location • Lack of time	• Medical ineligibility • Anemia concerns • Fear of contracting infections	• Needle phobia • Fear of seeing blood • Fear of fainting • Fear of pain • General anxiety about procedure • Mistrust of hospitals/blood banks • Misconceptions • Perceiving oneself as unsuited to donate • Negative previous donation experience



Results (3): Common mentioned facilitators

	Prosocial	Social	Visibility	Incentives
Facilitators	• Altruism • Helping family/friends in need • Saving lives • Serving the homeland • Moral duty • Religious obligation	• Being encouraged by others • Seeing peers donate • Staff hospitality	• Education programs at schools or universities • Mobile blood donation units • Awareness of blood bank needs	• Token gifts • Day off from work • Cash • Health incentives



Global South

Barriers and facilitators for blood donation





Results (4): Sub-Saharan Africa

	Barriers	Facilitators
East Africa: 23 studies: Ethiopia [20], Uganda [2], Tanzania [1]	• Limited donation site access • Misconceptions	• Altruism • Civic duty • Opportunities for disease testing
West Africa: 20 studies: Nigeria [13], Ghana [3], Togo [2], Senegal [1], Niger [1]	• Privacy concerns • Fear of infections • Religious beliefs	• Awareness of shortages • Antenatal registration
Southern Africa: 7 studies: South Africa [5], Botswana [1], Namibia [1]	• Fear and misconceptions • Skepticism about racial discrimination	• Altruism • Education • Health incentives
Central Africa: 3 studies: Cameroon [3]	• Not being asked to donate • Time constraints	• Altruism • Staff hospitality • Non-monetary incentives



Results (4): South America & Caribbean

	Barriers	Facilitators
South America: 13 studies: Brazil [10], Peru [1], Colombia [1], Chile [1]	• Lack of knowledge about donation process • Concerns about sterility • Lower socioeconomic status • Lower education level • Younger age	• Altruism • Religious beliefs • Influence of family/friends • Teachers as key influencers
Caribbean: 5 studies: Trinidad & Tobago [3], Grenada [1], Jamaica [1]	• Low awareness of blood shortages • Fear of infection • Mistrust of transfusion-related procedures	• Having ill family members • Donor convenience • National awareness campaigns • Being an university student • Being male



Results (4): South(east) Asia

	Barriers	Facilitators
South Asia: 60 studies: India [38], Pakistan [18], Bangladesh [3], Nepal [1]	• Logistical challenges • Low awareness & misinformation • Low social trust in blood bank • Preference for donating to relatives	• Transparency • Regular invitations • Campaigns emphasizing social responsibility • Incentives or recognition for donors
Southeast Asia: 18 studies: Malaysia [13], Philippines [2], Thailand [2], Myanmar [1]	• Inconvenient hours/locations • Knowledge gaps & misconceptions • Fear of donation • Refusal to donate to other religions/races	• Altruism • Social capital • Experienced staff • Social media use for promotion • Awareness campaigns in universities/shopping centres • Being young



Results (4): East & Central Asia

	Barriers	Facilitators
East Asia: 17 studies: China [14], Hong Kong [1], Japan [1], Korea [1]	• Lack of knowledge • Misconceptions about health effects of donation • Mistrust • Self-perception of poor health	• Buddhist beliefs • Social pressure • SMS reminders • Targeted promotion channels • Incentives: gifts & health checks • Experience of receiving blood • Desire to know screening results • Being an organ donor
Central Asia: 1 study: Kazakhstan [1]	• Not explicitly mentioned	• Helping relatives, friends or colleagues • Being male and/or a young adult



Results (4): Middle East & North-Africa

	Barriers	Facilitators
Middle East: 49 studies: Saudi Arabia [27], Turkey [8], Jordan [3], Palestine [3], Qatar [1], Israel [1], UAE [1], Syria [2], Bahrain [1], Iraq [1], Yemen [1]	• Difficulty accessing donation centers • Anemia concerns • Fear of contracting infections • Women already losing blood through menstruation • Monetary incentives	• Helping family/friends in need • Religious beliefs • Education programs at school • Mobile blood donation units • Day off work • Being male
North-Africa: 3 studies: Tunisia [2], Algeria [1], Egypt [1], Libya [1], Morocco [1], Sudan [1],	• Not being asked • Medical ineligibility • Fear of pain or infection	• Solidarity • Religious beliefs • Insurance for family



Results (4): Other

	Barriers	Facilitators
Non EU: 5 studies: Russia [2], Serbia [1], Belarus [1], Albania [1]	• Health ineligibility • Lack of awareness • Time-related concerns	• Altruism • Monetary incentives • Being female • Living outside capital city • Having a healthy lifestyle



Ethnic minorities in

Global North

Barriers and facilitators for blood
donation





Results (5): Global North ethnic minorities

	Barriers	Facilitators
Europe: 11 studies: UK [5], Netherlands [4], France [1], Ireland [1]	• Lack of information about blood banks and donation procedure • Inconvenience • Malaria-related barriers • Emotional value of blood as a symbol of family ties	• Altruism • Religious beliefs • Community focus • Awareness of SCD • Personal recruitment appeals • Non-monetary incentives (time off work) • Expressive sense of citizenship
North America: 18 studies: USA [16], Canada [2]	• Language barriers • Privacy concerns • Donor deferral and ineligibility • Mistrust of healthcare system • Systemic racism/discrimination • Sociocultural beliefs	• Ability to save a life • Convenient time & space • Assurance of safety of donation • Spiritual leader encouragement • Being asked to donate (at work) • Health screen



Results (5): Global North ethnic minorities

	Barriers	Facilitators
North America: 18 studies: USA [16], Canada [2]	• Systemic racism • Mistrust of healthcare system • Sociocultural beliefs • Donor deferral and ineligibility • Privacy concerns • Language barriers	• Ability to save a life • Being asked to donate (at work) • Health screen • Convenient time & space • Assurance of safety of donation • Spiritual leader encouragement
Australia: 10 studies	• Individuals not feeling included in new host society • Perceived discrimination • "They don't want our blood" • Medical mistrust	• Increased knowledge • Religious beliefs • Bicultural or integrated cultural orientation



Conclusions

- Similar barriers and facilitators are observed in the Global South as in the Global North
- Though, each region shows unique influences shaped by its specific beliefs, norms, and practices
- Ethnic minorities exhibit different donation behaviors in host countries compared to countries of origin, reflecting changes in barriers and facilitators they encounter
- Necessary to focus on raising awareness and increasing visibility
- Tailored region-specific interventions are essential

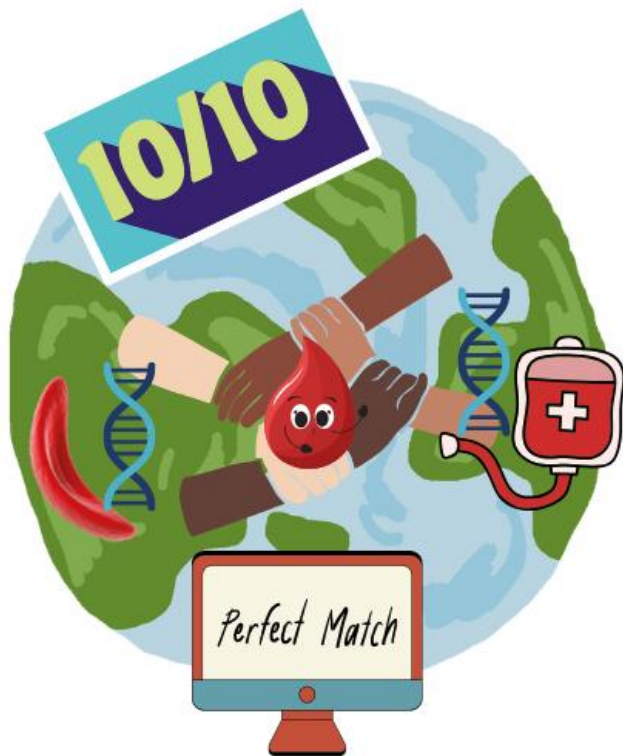


What's more to come?

- Analyzing intervention studies included in review
- Focus groups will be organized to discuss findings
- Targeted intervention will be developed and piloted



Ideal world





Sanquin

For Life.

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The missing donors: Barriers and motivators of blood donation among individuals with and without a migration background

Dr. Besarta Veseli, University of Hamburg

Dr. Sigrun Leipnitz, GRC BDS North-East & Baden-Württemberg Hessen

Prof. Edlira Shehu, University of Groningen

Prof. Michel Clement, University of Hamburg

Slides available upon request: besarta.veseli@uni-hamburg.de

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Examining prosocial tendencies in MSM: Potential impacts on blood donation following the 2023 reform

Antonia Leisse, M.Sc., University of Hamburg
Prof. Michel Clement, University of Hamburg

Slides available upon request: antonia.leisse@uni-hamburg.de